

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

26 MAY 2016

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP
SERVICES**

POTENTIAL CANDIDATE EVENT

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Democratic Services Committee regarding the provisional plans to provide a 'Potential Candidate' event, for anyone considering standing as a Bridgend County Borough Council Councillor at the Local Government Elections in 2017.

2. Connection to Corporate Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

- 2.1 The report details the support to be provided to Elected Members and assists in the achievement of all of the following corporate priorities:

1. **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
2. **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

- 2.2 Although the duty to promote local democracy has been removed from Local Authorities in Wales, this proposal would present a timely opportunity to meet the aims of the Electoral Registration Officer to:

- Plan and deliver public awareness activities for the elections
- Provide accessibility of information to electors
- Communicate information to candidates and agents.

3. Background.

- 3.1 Local Democracy Week is held every year in October with the purpose of:

- strengthening links between elected representatives and their communities
- increase participation in the democratic process
- involvement of citizens in community affairs

- increase their knowledge of local democratic institutions and processes

- 3.2 With the Local Government Elections in May 2017, this year's Local Democracy Week (10-16 October 2016) would be an appropriate time to begin preparations for the elections and to actively involve the electorate in the democratic process.
- 3.3 A similar event was held in 2011 and a total of 38 people attended the event which was well received. The feedback from those attending was very positive with comments including "Very satisfied; this was a very well organised enjoyable and informative event" and "I thoroughly enjoyed this session, it was informative and gave me a real insight into the role". Attendees also suggested other possible activities for the future Local Democracy events which included the shadowing of a councillor for a day. A number of the attendees were subsequently elected as BCBC Councillors.
- 3.4 The WLGA and the Member Support Officer Network have planned to co-ordinate the promotion of the Local Government Elections in 2017 throughout Wales during local democracy week. This will provide a range of events which will encourage the participation of the public and political parties in the democratic process and increase the awareness of the election.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 It is proposed that Bridgend County Borough Council hold Potential Candidate awareness session(s) during Local Democracy Week which can be attended by any constituents of the County Borough of Bridgend.
- 4.1.2 Each event would take approximately three hours and comprise two parts. The first part would outline information about the role of the councillor and the functions of the Council. The second part would provide information regarding how an individual becomes a candidate at the election and the processes for being elected.
- 4.1.3 The session(s) are planned to provide information and not to be political. If potential candidates require further information regarding political parties they can be signposted to political representatives outside of these events.
- 4.1.3 The following general topics are planned to be included:-

Part 1

- Overview of the services provided by BCBC
- The role of a BCBC councillor
 - The time commitment for councillors
 - Ward work
- An overview of the decision making process
- An overview of the Code of Conduct
- The support provided to elected Member

Break approx. 30 minutes

Part 2

- Overview of the Electoral roles and responsibilities
- Standing for election

- Qualification
- Nomination
- Uncontested elections
- Restrictions and offences
- Sign posting for further information
 - Elections team
 - Political groups
 - Electoral Commission
 - “Be a Councillor” WLGA handbook

4.1.4 The events are planned to be as interactive as possible in order to engage effectively with those attending and to aid their understanding of the subject matter.

4.2 Delivery

4.2.1 The sessions are to be fully developed by officers from Electoral and Democratic Services and it is hoped that additional support would also be provided at each event from:-

- cross party representation from existing councillors to utilise their “real-life” experience to bring the event to life for those attending. Elected Members may also be involved in informal discussions during the break.
- Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officer or suitable representatives

4.3 Promotion and publicity

4.3.1 Initial discussions with the Marketing and Engagement Team suggest that these event(s) would stimulate positive interest from constituents of the County Borough. Opportunities to publicise the event could be provided via the BCBC website, press releases, local media (newspapers and radio) and social media.

4.3.2 Other bodies such as the political groups and Town and Community Councils could be informed of the event with the aim of attracting those councillors and party members that are already planning to stand as Borough Councillors.

4.3.3 The level of interest from the public to participate in the event(s) cannot be gauged at this time. The publicity for the events would request that those wishing to participate, register their interest in attending in the event and confirm that they were considering standing in the Local Government Elections in May 2017.

4.3.4 This would assist in identifying the levels of engagement and participation for each event and prevent over subscription which would enable the necessary costs and resources to be managed more effectively.

4.4 Location, timings and venues

4.4.1 The event(s) is planned to be held in the Council Chamber which could facilitate approximately 60 people at each event.

4.4.2 It is proposed that these sessions be held in the early evenings starting at

approximately 4.00pm This will provide wider scope of access for those people interested in participating in these events who are currently working or have childcare issues to consider.

- 4.4.3 Venue arrangements will need to be agreed with the facilities team to ensure that there is appropriate access and support at the Civic Offices.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.

None

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken prior to any events taking place.

7. Financial Implications.

- 7.1 A detailed assessment of the costs which may be incurred will be completed following consideration of the proposals by the Democratic Services Committee. The following expenditure is likely to be incurred and will be met from the Member Development Revenue budget:

- Venue fees including light refreshments
- Documentation including Welsh Translation
- Advertisement and Promotion
- Specialist support for attendees

8. Recommendation.

- 8.1 That the Democratic Services Committee considers the proposals for Potential Candidate event(s) planned to take place in Local Democracy Week 2016.

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Background documents – None